

Minutes of the State House Visitors Center Committee
Meeting: May 16, 2016
State House, Providence, Rhode Island

Present –SueEllen Kroll, Anne Connor, Elise Swearingen (substituting for Kristen Adamo), Jeff Dronzek, Jonathan Stevens; Secretary's office: Malen and Colleen

1. Meeting was called to order by Jonathan Stevens at 11:05.
2. *Approval of minutes of April 25, 2016 meeting.* On a motion by SueEllen, seconded by Jeff, the minutes of the April 25 meeting were approved.

Old Business

3. *Business Plan.* Jeff presented the latest draft of the business plan, section by section. The subsequent discussion included the following points:

- a. Jonathan proposed Executive Summary state that the purpose of SHVC emphasize three points:

- Orientation for visitors
- Gift shop
- Information Resource Center

- b. Jeff stated that the main purpose of a business plan is to ensure financial success. However, because the SHVC has a broader mission, its business plan should function more like a strategic plan. Anne agreed, stating that Secretary Gorbea has requested the SHVC emphasize civics in its mission. Elise asked how the VC could better function as an information resource center". While the gift shop should be the principal focus of the Plan, each of these areas should also be included.

- c. Jonathan asked about the reference to the need to access the communications director in the Secretary of State's office. How does decision making authority rest in the office, as it relates to the SHVC? Malen stated that new designs need to go through Communications Director. Jonathan suggested that the hierarchical order of decision making should be explained somewhere in the plan, as well as such functions as purchasing, which is subject to state regulations. Jeff recommended this be addressed in "Business Name and Legal History" on page 7 to explain how this SHVC fits within the SOS's office. Each needs some enhancements, 1-2 sentences of explanatory notes.

- d. SueEllen has added a section on page 4 about grants and partnerships. Jeff suggested that this new section be included in the marketing strategy. Further, grants and partnerships should also be included in "Marketing & Business Opportunities" as an extension of Executive Summary

SueEllen raised a question as to how best to position the SHVC with partners who could be eligible for grants. The State House Restoration Society has been raising money to restore the portraits in the State House, successfully applying for Champlin grants. The SHRS should be mentioned in an appropriate place in the Business Plan.

e. Products and Services should be updated to include new inventory choices. A new page of suggested inventory items should be included.

f. Jonathan recommended taking the Vision and Mission on page 6 and moving it to the beginning of the document. Jeff agreed.

g. Jonathan recommended adding to the strategies list on page 8 contacting RISCA to enable the SHVC access to RISCA's annual Christmas school music concert program.

h. SueEllen recommended including connecting with the RI Center for the Book – Kids Reading Across RI project.

i. Jeff recommended including in the plan a critical review and documentation of RI centric inventory of some gift shops comparable to the SHVC.

New Business

4. *Elementary School Tours.* Malen stated that she would like to initiate an outreach program to teachers of school classes scheduled to tour the State House. The Secretary's office now provides her with a weekly schedule of tours. She presented a draft order list featuring SHVC merchandise. Jonathan asked if the Board could receive the schedule, in order to get a better sense of the potential market.

Jeff made a motion to authorize Malen to pre-package inexpensive merchandise for purchase in advance by students. Seconded by SueEllen. Jonathan suggested that a list of only 4-5 items, not more than \$3.00 each, be offered to students by a list provided to the teachers in advance. Product samples should be sent to the teachers so the students can see them. Malen was authorized to proceed with on a case by case basis in order to get some experience before the school year ends. Motion passed, 5-0.

5. *Other potential markets.* Anne Conner asked if other tour groups could be reached out to in a similar manner. Girl Scouts? Camp groups? Jonathan suggested that Malen contact the staff in the Governor's office who schedules events for the State Room or Rotunda.

6. *Peddler's cart.* A lively discussion ensued about the need for a peddler's cart, to enable the SHVC to have the mobility to market its wares by engaging customers where they congregate, including the Bell Room, second floor corridors, and Library. Malen will reach out to the "West Wing" café to see if the SHVC could borrow their cart.

7. *Inventory.* Malen presented a spreadsheet of the current inventory. The Board requested she reorder the items by price, from lowest to highest, and add a column to indicate turnover, a simple indication such as fast, medium and slow would suffice.

8. *New volunteer.* Anne announced that the SHVC has a new volunteer, Doris LAST NAME?, who recently retired from the Secretary's office after ten years of service. She is a great addition, a great complement to Jim. Between them both, every weekday morning is now covered, enabling Malen the time to work on other projects.

9. On a motion by Anne, the meeting was adjourned at 12:02pm

Next meeting: Monday, June 6th